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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: KOSOVO SECURITY INSTITUTIONS MOVE FORWARD

Classified By: Ambassador Tina S. Kaidanow for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

1. (SBU) Summary: Kosovo, in cooperation with NATO advisors, is making progress developing its security institutions in line with the Ahtisaari Plan, and the new Kosovo Security Force is on schedule to be established January 5, 2009. Work continues on implementing the North Atlantic Council's June 12 three-part plan, which shapes NATO's assistance in organizing Kosovo's security framework and contains the following elements: 1) assist Kosovo authorities in establishing a ministry to exercise civilian control over the Kosovo Security Force (KSF); 2) supervise and support the stand-up and training of a multi-ethnic KSF; and 3) supervise the dissolution of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). This cable reviews developments in each of these three areas including standing up the Ministry of the KSF (MKSF), selection of Fehmi Mujota as the Minister of the KSF, the impending appointment of LTG Sylejman Selimi as the new KSF commander, and advancing plans to dissolve the KPC. Challenges on the horizon include finding a permanent headquarters building for the MoKSF, surmounting funding and equipment shortages, and managing discontent among KPC members not selected to join the KSF when it becomes operational on January 5, 2009. A key date will be December 12, 2008, when those selected from the KPC to become KSF members will be announced; we will need to monitor closely to ensure that the residual elements of the KPC do not create trouble for the Kosovo political leadership. END SUMMARY

Ministry of the KSF

2. (SBU) NATO's 12-person Ministry Advisory Team (MAT) of international staffers started work in January 2008, laying the groundwork for establishing Kosovo's new Ministry of the Kosovo Security Force (MKSF). The team's initial task was to develop a legal framework and organization for the new ministry and its uniformed service. In June, the GOK adopted laws establishing the MKSF, creating the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), and defining service in the KSF. On August 4, the Government of Kosovo (GoK) announced Fehmi Mujota (PDK party) as the first Minister of the Kosovo Security Force and Dr. Shkelzen Sylaj as the ministry's acting Permanent Secretary. Mujota, a former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) officer, is a known and respected political figure in Kosovo, having previously served as mayor of Shtime Municipality, as

a Member of the Assembly, and as part of Kosovo's delegation to the talks on the future status for Kosovo. Dr. Sylaj is a former KLA and KPC officer and was the KPC Director of Medical Affairs prior to becoming acting permanent secretary.

¶3. (SBU) The MKSF is an integrated civilian ministry and serves also as KSF headquarters. The ministry's permanent secretary and the KSF commander both report to the minister. Mujota plans to have--and the MKSF law allows--two deputy ministers. He has not yet appointed these deputies, but we expect that one will come from coalition partner LDK and one will be an ethnic minority. At present, staffing within the MKSF is minimal, consisting of four political advisors, a financial advisor, a procurement advisor and a small administrative staff. Once fully staffed, the ministry will have 106 civil servants and 63 uniformed members, with a civilian-led director for planning and policy and a uniformed KSF officer as director of operations.

¶4. (SBU) While the MKSF's framework is in place, challenges remain. Among the largest are securing a permanent building for the ministry and hiring civilian staff. The MKSF had planned to move into a portion of the headquarters building that UNMIK vacated in October, but EULEX as the primary tenant informed the ministry that it needs to occupy the entire building. Minister Mujota has requested Prime Minister Thaci's assistance in resolving the issue, but for the time being the MKSF remains without a permanent home. Alternate locations under consideration include the current KPC Headquarters or the KPC Training and Doctrine Command, both in Pristina.

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¶5. (SBU) The MKSF must also start staffing its civilian positions, a process that was delayed while the ministry developed and sought approval for its new salary structure. According to the new plan--approved by the Cabinet on November 7--KSF members will receive salaries equal to the Kosovo Police Service (currently, KPC members make half the salary of a police officer), and civil servants will receive salaries five percent lower than their uniformed counterparts of equivalent KSF rank. (NOTE: The MKSF civilian salaries are in some cases more than twice as high as those for equivalent positions in other government ministries. END NOTE.)

Standing Up the KSF

¶6. (SBU) NATO's Military Civil Advisory Division (MCA) reports to KFOR and oversees the KSF's stand-up. The team is responsible for recruiting, screening, selecting and training future KSF members. Initial efforts have centered on screening the 2,768 KPC members, out of approximately 2,900 who applied earlier in the year to join the KSF. Among this application pool, there are 130 minority candidates, 10 of whom are Serbs. The screening process includes aptitude, physical, medical, and security checks followed by a personal interview. Thus far, 70 applicants have not shown up for their interviews; 27 withdrew their applications; and the selection board had to reject four candidates who stated that they were unwilling to work with minorities. Medical failures are running at a 20% rate due to lung and liver problems.

¶7. (SBU) The KSF Commander selection board met on November 7 to screen the two eligible candidates for the KSF's top job: LTG Sylejman Selimi, KPC Commander, and MG Rrahman Rama, KPC Deputy Commander. The selection board consisted of Minister Mujota and two KFOR participants: COMKFOR, Italian MG Gay; and COSKFOR, U.S. BG Berger. We are awaiting the government's official announcement, but we have learned that LTG Selimi will be the new commander and expect MG Rama to be dual-hatted as the Deputy Commander and Land Forces Commander. Senior Officer (Colonel and above) selection will

take place in late November, followed by other officers and ranks during the early part of December.

¶18. (SBU) On December 12, the KSF will make formal announcements regarding whom it has selected from the KPC to make the transition to the KSF, approximately 1,400 to 1,500 soldiers according to KFOR's estimate. After this critical date, KPC members not selected will enter off-duty status--available only for crisis response--and will receive orders to concentrate on resettlement. Those selected for the KSF will remain on-duty as KPC members until enlisted in the KSF on January 5.

¶19. (SBU) NATO-sponsored training for 52 senior officers--colonels and higher--began in early November to ensure the leadership is prepared for KSF stand-up on January 15. (NOTE: Only 25 of the senior officers will be selected for the KSF following the selection board later this month. END NOTE) Logistics training will be held in mid-November in preparation for the first basic training class that begins on January 5. Kosovo-wide recruitment will begin in January, with the first training class for non-KPC members to begin in June. Former KPC members who do not make the December 12 cut are not eligible to apply for later membership in open recruiting.

¶110. (SBU) The MKSF is developing, with NATO assistance, its National Training Center in Ferizaj, and construction is proceeding but behind schedule on the dormitory, headquarters, and storage areas. In the interim, the ministry has received permission to use the Kosovo Police Service Training Center in Vustrri for the first basic training class in January.

¶11. (SBU) As the KSF prepares to launch its new force,

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there is concern over inadequate funding and insufficient equipment. SHAPE held a conference for donor nations on October 8 in Brussels to make members aware of the 43 million Euro required to stand-up the KSF. The conference yielded no significant results, and the KSF's trust fund has received only 812 thousand Euro to date and no concrete offers of equipment. The USG is providing uniforms out of excess equipment and has pledged USD 500K to the Trust Fund to assist with initial training. Germany's Minister of Defense, during a visit to Kosovo earlier this month, announced a seven million Euro donation for training, equipment and vehicles. It is not yet clear when or in what form Germany will finalize this donation.

Dissolving the KPC with Dignity

¶12. (SBU) NATO, in coordination with UNMIK's Office of the KPC Coordinator (OKPCC), is assisting with the KPC's stand-down. A resettlement program for KPC members not selected for the KSF allows KPC members to demobilize with dignity; gives due recognition for their distinguished service; and helps KPC members achieve sustainable livelihoods. The OKPCC's resettlement program provides severance payments and employment assistance for those KPC members not selected for the KSF. The program is funded through a NATO trust fund that has collected 2.5 million Euro and received pledges for an additional 8.5 million Euro, including USD 3 million from the USG. This trust fund will cover all costs for the resettlement program's three-year duration. UNDP will handle overall program management, communication, and severance payments; and a local NGO will provide employment assistance.

¶13. (SBU) All 2,900 KPC members will be notified by letter on December 12 of their status for the KSF. The 1,500 not selected will remain KPC members and receive their salaries through June 15, 2009 when the KPC is dissolved according to the Constitution. These members will also receive severance

payments, equivalent to 12 months of salary to be paid monthly beginning in July. The resettlement program will provide training, education, employment assistance and/or small business assistance. Those 45 years old and above are also eligible for a KPC pension according to a law passed in October specifically for the KPC dissolution.

Grumbling in the Ranks

¶14. (SBU) As the KSF's stand-up and KPC's dissolution have progressed over the course of this year, poor communication has left KPC members and the general public misinformed about the course of events. Some KPC units have been uncooperative in returning equipment and vacating barracks. Even when the OKPCC and UNDP have developed briefing materials on resettlement and transition, they have not always been able to present the information due to insufficient coordination with KPC zone commanders. As a result of missed and mishandled opportunities to inform KPC members about their rights and benefits and what the future changes mean for Kosovo's security, we are seeing more signs of KPC resentment towards the KPC/KSF transition process.

¶15. (SBU) KPC members, including the KPC Commander, have gone to the prime minister's office, the Assembly, and the press stating that the government is not taking care of and protecting KPC members. A common argument we hear is that all KPC members not selected for the KSF should be guaranteed jobs or be eligible for the KPC pension regardless of age. In response to these arguments, Prime Minister Thaci has instructed KSF Minister Mujota to explore the possibility of government job opportunities and other benefits for non-selected KPC members, such as free transportation, health and medical benefits and possible tax breaks. The ripple effect, however, has prompted Minister of Internal Affairs Zenun Pajaziti to complain to us that this is creating pressure to find sinecures within his ministry's Border Police at a time when he is trying to downsize and

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rationalize police operations across the country.

¶16. (C) The KPC, as the KLA's post-conflict successor, enjoys a privileged position within Kosovo's social and political landscape. Kosovo refers to KLA combatants who lost their lives in conflict with Serbia as national martyrs, and the KPC often exploits its storied history for its own purposes. As the transition date approaches we anticipate that some influential members within the KPC will agitate for greater benefits for their men. Two current KPC units merit special attention: the KPC Guard and Protection Zone 1 (PZ 1).

-- The KPC Guard is commanded by BG Nuredin Lushtaku who caused problems in January 2007 when he refused to allow Guard Members to participate in a ceremony honoring the late President Rugova.

-- PZ 1 is commanded by BG Bashkim Jashari, son of Adem Jashari and influential in the Skenderaj area.

Both Lushtaku and Jashari believe all KPC members should be eligible for the KSF, and each enjoys strong support from his troops. Prime Minister Thaci has wartime ties to both men, and he must exert his leadership and influence to maintain control over the transition. There are rumors that those not selected may pressure others to reject their new posts in the KSF. It is essential that Thaci and other wartime leaders now serving in politics use their stature to foster a peaceful transition within Kosovo's principal security institution.

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